

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for selectively retrieving and displaying supplemental content related to a television program being displayed by an interactive television system, the method comprising:

- 5 receiving a user command to find supplemental content;
obtaining contextual information pertaining to the television program being displayed;
sending an information request to a content source, the information request comprising the contextual information; and
10 in response to the content source identifying supplemental content related to the television program being displayed based upon the contextual information, retrieving the supplemental content from the content source for display by the interactive television system.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the user command is
15 received in response to a user activating a specifically-designated button on a remote control device for the interactive television system.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of the television program being displayed.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein obtaining comprises:
20 reading the indication of the television program from vertical blanking interval (VBI) data associated with the television program.

5. The method of claim 3, wherein obtaining comprises:

reading the indication of the television program from electronic programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

25 6. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
 searching the content source for supplemental content related to
the indication of the television program.

 7. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information
comprises a time index.

30 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the time index indicates a
time at which the user command is received.

 9. The method of claim 7, further comprising:
 searching the content source for supplemental content related to a
particular time segment of the television program based upon the time index.

35 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information
comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated
with the television program.

 11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:
 searching the content source for supplemental content comprising
40 the at least one keyword.

 12 The method of claim 11, further comprising:
 in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one
keyword not being found at the content source:

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- 65 18. The method of claim 1, wherein the contextual information
comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, the method further
comprising:
 using the indication the channel to identify a content source to
receive the information request.
- 70 19. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
displaying the supplemental content simultaneously with the
 television program.
20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:
reducing the size of the displayed television program relative to the
75 size of the displayed supplemental content.
21. The method of claim 1, wherein retrieving comprises:
receiving a list of supplemental content items from the content
source in response to a search by the content source;
 receiving a user selection of a supplemental content item from the
80 list;
 sending the user selection to the content source; and
 retrieving from the content source the selected supplemental
content item for display by the interactive television system.
22. The method of claim 21, wherein the list comprises at least
85 one link to an item of supplemental content stored at the content source.
23. The method of claim 22, wherein the at least one link
comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

130 35. The system of claim 33, wherein the set top box is further
configured to read the indication of the television program from electronic
programming guide (EPG) data associated with the television program.

 36. The system of claim 33, further comprising:
a search engine configured to search the content source for
135 supplemental content related to the indication of the television program.

 37. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information
comprises a time index.

 38. The system of claim 37, wherein the time index indicates a
time at which the user command is received.

140 39. The system of claim 37, further comprising:
a search engine configured to search the content source for
supplemental content related to a particular time segment of the television
program based upon the time index.

 40. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information
145 comprises at least one keyword obtained from closed-captioning text associated
with the television program.

 41. The system of claim 40, further comprising:
a search engine configured to search the content source for
supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword.

150 42 The system of claim 41, further comprising:

a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content comprising the at least one keyword;

155 wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

43. The system of claim 31, further comprising:

160 a search engine configured, in response to supplemental content related to the television program not being found at the content source, to search a global information network for supplemental content related to the television program based on the contextual information; and

165 wherein the set top box is further configured to retrieve the supplemental content from the global information network for display by the interactive television system.

44. The system of claim 31, wherein the information request comprises an identifier of the interactive television system.

45. The system of claim 44, wherein the identifier comprises a media access control (MAC) address.

170 46. The system of claim 44, wherein the identifier comprises an Internet protocol (IP) address.

47. The system of claim 44, wherein the content source is configured to send the identified supplemental content to an interactive television system associated with the identifier.

175 48. The system of claim 31, wherein the contextual information comprises an indication of a channel being displayed, and wherein the set top box is further configured to use the indication the channel to identify a content source to receive the information request.

49. The system of claim 31, wherein set top box is configured to
180 simultaneously display the supplemental content with the television program.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein the set top box is further configured to reduce the size of the displayed television program relative to the size of the displayed supplemental content.

51. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further
185 configured to receive a list of supplemental content items from the content source
in response to a search by the content source, receive a user selection of a
supplemental content item from the list, send the user selection to the content
source, and retrieve from the content source the selected supplemental content
item for display by the interactive television system.

190 52. The system of claim 51, wherein the list comprises at least
one link to an item of supplemental content stored at the content source.

53. The system of claim 52, wherein the at least one link comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

54. The system of claim 50, further comprising:
195 a filtering component configured to filter the list of items of
supplemental content results based on a set of user preferences.

55. The system of claim 54, wherein the information request
comprises the set of user preferences.

56. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference
200 indicates a type of supplemental content to exclude.

57. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference
indicates a type of supplemental content preferred by the user.

58. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference
indicates a source of supplemental content preferred by the user.

59. The system of claim 54, wherein at least one user preference
205 is stored in response to historical analysis of user selections from prior lists of
items of supplemental content.

60. The system of claim 31, wherein the set top box is further
configured to receive a list of supplemental content items from the content source
210 in response to a search of a global information network, receive a user selection
of a supplemental content item from the list, and retrieve from the global
information network the selected supplemental content item for display by the
interactive television system.